

February 21, 2009

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee,

I write to you as a private citizen of the state of Connecticut who also chairs the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of Connecticut, Storrs campus.

As a private citizen of the state and a mother of two boys who were educated in the Norwich Public School system and had the opportunity of taking high school language courses, I have had ample opportunities to observe the fundamental difference that language made in their young lives. One is headed to medical school in fall and will pursue a career in emergency room medicine. The Spanish language skills that he acquired served him very well during a competitive application process and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so in the future. I would also like to note that, as an undergraduate in Biochemistry and Molecular and Cell Biology, he volunteered to teach English reading to underprivileged Hispanic children. I have no doubt that he felt the confidence to do so precisely because he had learned Spanish language at the High School. My second son took Italian in High School. He is now a sophomore pursuing studies in Industrial Design and will work as an intern in Milan, Italy. As in the case of my first son, he too will be able to pursue his dreams because of the opportunities offered to him by the Norwich Public School system.

The impact that language learning has had on the lives of my children is something that I observe daily in my work at the University of Connecticut, where scores of students succeed because they have acquired the language skills that are vital not only to compete in a global economy but to contribute as responsible and caring citizens to an increasingly multicultural world. This is the reason why I am a strong supporter of a two-year high school world language graduation requirement for all children of the state.

Education is the great equalizer and each and every child of the state of Connecticut deserves the opportunity.

I hope that you will give this crucial educational issue the careful consideration that it deserves.

Yours, truly

Norma Bouchard